

Dear Senator Harp, Senator Prague, Representative Walker, Representative Hamm, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Hello. My name is Gail Feld.

I have been a teacher of the visually impaired since 1975. I want to vigorously oppose House Bill 6380.

BESB is one of the oldest, most respected agencies in the United States for people who are blind. Helen Keller was among the many clients we have served in our 118-year history. Our centralized model serves visually impaired people from preschool through geriatric.

We are able to offer much more effective and comprehensive services than most other states that do not have a strong, dedicated agency.

BESB has evolved into a premier organization serving blind people and a model that others seek to emulate. Dismantling BESB would only serve to dilute its effectiveness, resulting in a diminishing quantity and quality of services for our constituents.

As a BESB teacher of the blind, I enjoy the privilege of forming a strong bond with my students and their families whom I serve as a resource and advocate. My preschool students range from newborn through age 5, from visually impaired through totally blind, often with other disabilities.

As a BESB employee, I can truly serve my diverse caseload by providing direct teaching as well as special materials, recreational opportunities, rehabilitation services, mobility services and in-services to the many Birth-to-Three personnel and preschool teachers I interact with.

Disbanding BESB would effectively preclude such comprehensive and meaningful services.